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THE INFLUENCE OF DIME NOVELS ON THEODORE DREISER

By Lydia S. Godfrey



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THE INFLUENCE OF DIME NOVELS ON THEODORE DREISER

By Lydia S. Godfrey

The dime novels of the nineteenth century had a significant role in creating and stimulating Theodore Dreiser's initial interest in the image of the struggling working girl. It is, of course, true that this was a type he came to know well through the lives of his older sisters, but, it is equally true, the working girl stories in the family story papers, in the small quarto-sized black and white "libraries," and in the paper bound romantic novels affected Dreiser profoundly. The image of the working girl pervades Dreiser's major novels. Her plight, her jobs, her pitfalls, her dilemmas, and her loves are elements in the lives of three young women immortalized in his fiction: Carrie Meeber in "Sister Carrie," Jennie Gerhardt, in the novel by the same name, and Roberta Alden in "An American Tragedy." It is, in fact, Dreiser, himself, who described the effect the working girl stories in the dime novels and their authors had upon him.

Dreiser's autobiography, "Dawn, A History of Myself," published in 1931, as well as the manuscripts and typscripts associated with it, attest to the fact that it was the family story papers of the day that sparked Dreiser's initial interest in the working girl image. According to his own account, he was a boy of almost ten, when the family first moved to Evansville, Illinois, in the spring of 1881, and Dreiser "began to read with interest" the family story papers which were thrown over the fence each week.(1) He mentioned three papers specifically: the "Family Story Paper," the "Fireside Companion," and the "New York Weekly," which were published by rivaling dime novel firms in New York City.

Once Dreiser began to read their romantic tales, he became fascinated. "I had never seen one of these papers before reaching Evansville," he wrote; then added in the next breath that once he had started, "Forthwith I was lost."(2) He confessed to making weekly trips to the news-stands where, clutching a hard earned nickel, he would purchase each new issue, intrigued by the plight of "the poor forlorn working girl . . . fascinated by these girls as much as any drug victim is enticed by a drug."(3) In an unpublished passage from a "Dawn" manuscript Dreiser explained, at some length, the effect the working girl stories had had upon him.

The factories and meadows and millionaires' row and Wall Street of far-off New York reached out and enmeshed me. I just had to see what became of the poor, beautiful, struggling working girl who was seized by thugs on her way from work, bundled into a carriage and driven, gagged, and blindfolded, to a wretched shanty far out on the Hackensack meadows, where she was confronted by her lustful and im-

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moral pursuer of the Four Hundred. I read and read. Each new sample that was thrown over our front fence merely launched me upon newer horrors and terrors. I began to see what a wild place the world was and how wonderful.(4)

Since Dreiser was around sixty when he wrote "Dawn" and, at that age, clearly remembered the effect dime novel stories and their working girl heroines had had upon him as a boy, it is reasonable to assume that memories of these tales also influenced him when, as a young man of twenty-eight, in the autumn of 1899, he began to write "Sister Carrie."

The working girl story had become a prominent feature of the family story paper by 1871, the year Dreiser was born. By that year, in real life the working girl earned about \$6.00 a week, and, after paying for food, transportation, and contributing to family expenses, she was lucky if she had six cents a week left over.(5) With the introduction of the sewing-machine in the 1860's, her plight had worsened, for the new machine took over many of her tasks.(6) This situation was reflected, of course, in the family story papers of the period; consequently in the 1880's there were numerous sewing girl tales.(7) Although seamstresses always remained a popular character in the story paper world, gradually the working girls branched out into many fields. They became: mill hands, factory workers, and loom girls, shop girls, beggar girls, book folders and binders, cigarette girls, servants, flower girls, candy girls, and street singers.(8) Although only a few were governesses, there were lady detectives, telephone and telegraph operators and a typewriter, the working girl in one story being referred to as the machine itself.(9) In the creative field, there was at least one writer who wrote "passion" stories, one reporter, one artist, an actress, and a "New Woman" who dared to be a "Bachelor Girl" in the 1890's.(10)

The point is, of course, that the struggling working girl was already a familiar image in the American popular fiction of the nineteenth century. In the dime novels, however, as the titles suggest, the emphasis was on romance—the working heroines' love lives, not their work lives. The heroines were always pure, pursued, and pretty. Melodramatic plots propelled them from one emotional crisis and from one stock character to another. The stock characters were: the lecherous male, the girlfriend of the lecherous male, the rich, handsome hero, and the girl who loved him.(11)

These statements are not intended to say, of course, that Dreiser read all of these stories but to suggest that since they were readily available, and given his early interest in the working girl tales of the family story papers, it is probable that he continued, at least, to glance at them. In fact a letter Dreiser wrote from Los Angeles on 26 August 1921 to Ernest Boyd, editorial writer on the New York Post, testified to such a possibility. While the letter, which was subsequently published over a newspaper headline, "Why Not Tell Europe about Bertha M. Clay?" certainly did not champion the dime novel or its authors, it did show some knowledge about the dime novel world.

What had happened was that to a list of seventy-nine American authors, composed originally by Professor Chesles Cestre, Head of the Department of American Literature and Civilization at the University of Paris, a list believed by him to be truly representative of American authors, a committee of five Americans had added 163 more names. Dreiser, who had been on the original list, along with his most distinguished contemporaries, belittled the so-called culture the final list represented. "Will Ring Lardner, and Eleanor H. Porter and Zane Gray and Harold Bell Wright continue to walk hand in hand, as they do in this revised and democratized list, with Henry James,

Edith Wharton, Mark Twain, Frank Norris etc?" he demanded.(12)

Sardonically, Dreiser concluded that the list makers had been guided by commercial rather than aesthetic principles. He believed they had settled primarily on works "representative of the dead level and commonplace of lower middle class writing. . ." Nevertheless, he insisted, since the list reflected what Americans read—their "intellectual pabulum" as he called it—he then went on to cite two "very obvious and disturbing omissions." Wrote Dreiser:

What I personally have to complain of, and that most bitterly, is that in looking over this very generous list of the finally elected, I fail to find the names of some our most democratic and hence our most significant workers. Where, for instance, is that of Laura Jean Libby, (sic) the author of 872 separate and distinct romances? And how was it that she came to be left out? Class jealousy? And Bertha M. Clay?

Although Dreiser then characterized Bertha M. Clay as merely a name created by her publishers, as one whose work was written on salary and said she was invented, flawed, and patented, the important point in this discussion is, first, that he mentioned Libbey and Clay at all, and, secondly, that he knew a good deal about them.(13)

There is, moreover, another reason Dreiser was probably aware of the popular fiction of the day, and that was it would have been difficult to remain unaware of it. Once a story was popular in the story paper world, it was reprinted, republished, reprinted, and republished over and over again by dime novel publishers. Thus, every popular story was kept constantly before the public in one form or another.(14) A study, for example, of the reprintings of just one of Laura Jean Libbey's stories handled by merely one of her six publishers is a case in point. Her story, "Leonie Locke; or, the Romance of a Beautiful New York Working Girl," was published originally by George Munro in the "Fireside Companion" in 1884.(15) Four years later it was republished in Munro's "Library of American Authors." The following year, 1889, Munro reprinted the story in the "Seaside Library." Its fourth reprinting came in Munro's series, "Laura Jean Libbey's Works" in 1892; the same year he published it again in the "Laurel Library." The story appeared a sixth time in Munro's series entitled "Laura Jean Libbey's Charming Stories" issued in 1896, and it appeared for a seventh time in Munro's "Sweetheart Series" in 1898.

Still another dime novel publishing practice which kept the working girl image repeatedly before the public included full front page illustrations of the heroine at her job, the lecherous boss lurking nearby. Moreover, there was a special series devoted to the working girl called the "New York Ten Cent Library," which included such titles as "The Fortunes of a Factory Girl," or "The Overseer's Daughter."(16)

Finally, let us look for a moment at the two dime novel authors Dreiser singled out and mentioned by name. Laura Jean Libbey was hardly the struggling, working girl type she described week after week in her popular romances. She was, on the contrary, a highly successful writer, worked for six rival publishers simultaneously, and, by Dreiser's own account, wrote 872 stories. She earned anywhere from \$50,000 to \$60,000 a year and even ran her own publishing venture for a time, a venture in which her friends paid her to publish their stories.(17) Her by-lines were often followed by an appraisal of the author which described Libbey as "The Greatest Living Novelist, whose Stories No Author Has Ever Been Able to Equal, and Whose Fame as the Favorite Writer of the People Has Never Been Surpassed."(18) Lib-

bey's working girl heroines were more modest; thy always found their fortunes but they NEVER forgot their humble origins.(19) Despite the lecherous male who appeared in her romances, Libbey blithely insisted: "I write of men as I find them—loyal, noble, brave, with a chivalrous reverence for true womanhood, and who hold that purity in women is the rosebloom that jewels her existence."(20) Dreiser, of course, wrote more realistically about the relationships between men and women.

The story behind Bertha M. Clay is a dime novel story in itself, but it is one which illustrates perfectly the duplicities and complexities of the Dime novel publishing world. Publishers kept stock names and assigned these names to writers with a story assignment. The creation of Bertha M. Clay began in England.(21) Between 1869 and 1884, an English author, Charlotte Mary Braeme, was published in the "Family Herald" of London; her stories were usually identified by her initials "C.M.B." American family story paper publishers pirated Mrs. Braeme's stories and then, adding insult to injury, reversed her initials and credited the tales to B.M.C." Finally in 1877, the ever-inventive "New York Weekly" gave "B.M.C." a name—"Bertha M. Clay." Rival publishers used the name for their stories, too, until finally in 1885 the "Weekly" claimed the name for its own.(22) "Clay's" stories, mushy love stories and working girl romances, flourished under the pens of many dime novelists, who, ultimately, produced over 1500 story titles until the early 1920's.(23) That Dreiser knew these facts indicates his awareness of this dime novel author's existence—or non-existence as the case may be.

In conclusion, one certainly cannot compare these dime novel authors or their stories of nineteenth century working girls with Theodore Dreiser or his work. However, the importance of these earlier stories is their influence on Dreiser, one to which Dreiser attested in his autobiographical "Dawn." Through Driser's power as a writer, he transformed the popular romanticized image of the nineteenth century working girl into vibrant alive young women who truly lived, loved, and suffered as the rest of us do. It is, however, the working girl image in the nineteenth century dime novels, that Dreiser started reading as a boy, from which Carrie Meeber, Jennie Gerhardt, and Roberta Alden ultimately evolved.

copyright 19 May 1983

Footnotes

1—Theodore Dreiser, "Dawn: A History of Myself" (New York: Horace Liveright, 1931), p. 125.

2—Ibid.

3—Theodore Dreiser, "Dawn" ms. University of Pennsylvania. The author expresses appreciation to Dr. Neva Westlake for permission to quote from Dreiser's unpublished manuscripts.

4—Theodore Dreiser, "Dawn" ms. University of Pennsylvania.

5—Mary Noel, "The Heyday of the Popular Story Weekly" (Ann Arbor, Michigan: University Microfilms, 1979), Doctoral Dissertation Series, Publication No. 8745, p. 587.

6—Noel, p. 585.

7—See for example: "The Fortunes, Good and Bad of a Sewing Girl; or, Out of Darkness into Light," the "Fireside Companion," 31 May 1880; "The Queen of Brides; or, From Seamstress to Mistress," "Family Story Paper," 26 April-28 June 1880; "Three Sewing Girls," "Fireside Companion," 9 Aug. 1880; "Lillian the Foundling; or, The Romance of a Sewing Girl," 8 November 1880-24 January 1881; "Sadie the Shirt Maker; or, The Iron Shroud of Toil,"

"Fireside Companion," 22 June 1885; "Little Leafy, the Cloakmaker's Beautiful Daughter. A Romantic Story of a Lovely Working Girl in the City of New York," "Family Story Paper," 5 June-26 August 1886; "Minnie, the Cloakmaker; or, Plot and Passion. A Story of the Knights of Labor," "Family Story Paper," 1 October-24 December 1887; "A Lovely Orphan; or, The Love Story of a Beautiful Sewing Girl," "Fireside Companion," 25 August 1888; "Amy, the Seamstress; or, The Life of a New York Sewing Girl," "Family Story Paper," 2 February-11 May 1889. The author is indebted to Edward T. LeBlanc for the use of his unpublished bibliographies on both the "Fireside Companion" and the "Family Story Paper" for all title listings in these footnotes.

8—See for example: "Willful Gaynell; or, The Little Beauty of the Passaic Cotton Mills," "Family Story Paper," 27 February-29 May 1886; "Nellie the Mill Hand; or, Put on the Black List. A Romance of the Mill and the Mansion," "Family Story Paper," 30 October-5 January 1886; "Pretty Rosalie, the Little Coquette of the Mill; or, Wooed at a Loom and Won in a Palace," "Family Story Paper," 24 December 1892-18 March 1893; "Stella, the Factory Girl; or, The Daughters of the Mill. A Tale of the Paterson Mills," "Family Story Paper," 17 October-26 December 1881; "Little Charm, the Factory Girl; or, Guarded by the Labor League. A Story of Life and Love among the Cotton Mills," "Family Story Paper," 29 September-29 December 1884; "The Love of Three Girls; or, The Rivalry Between an Heiress, A Beauty and a Factory Girl," "Family Story Paper," 1 October-24 December 1892; "Her Three Lovers; or, The Beautiful Factory Girl and the Belle of the 'Four Hundred,'" "Family Story Paper," 14 October 1893-13 January 1894; "Beautiful Ilda, the Handsomest Factory Girl in America," "Family Story Paper," 10 March-2 June 1894; "The Little Beauty of Lowell; or, The Struggle for a Factory Girl's Heart," "Family Story Paper," 14 September-3 December 1895; "Little Ruby Robins and the Love that Cursed this Factory's Life," "Family Story Paper," 25 January-18 April 1896; "Riches and Rags; or, A Loom Girl's Strange History. A Tale of the Lowell Mills," "Family Story Paper" 3 September-29 October 1887; "Out in the Storm; or, The Loom-Girl of Petersburg," "Fireside Companion," 31 March 1888; "Love at the Loom; or, Rivals in Palace and Tenement," "Family Story Paper," 11 March-18 May 1895; "Nellie, the Cotton Spinner; or, A Young Girl's Romantic Stories of a Passionate Love Ever Written," "Family Story Paper," 31 October 1896-6 February 1897; "Beatrice, the Orphan; or, The Shop Girl's Fatal Dream," "Family Story Paper," 14 February-18 April 1881; "Elfrida; or, a Shop Girl's Love Story," "Fireside Companion," 15 May 1882; "The Belle of the Dry Goods District; or, The Prettiest Salesgirl in New York," "Family Story Paper," 15-June-7 September 1895; "Little Barefoot; or, The Beggar Girl of New York," "Family Story Paper," 18 September-27 November 1882; "Bijou, The Beggar Maid; or, A Willful Girl's Adventures," "Family Story Paper," 11 January-29 Mar.; "Margery, the Beautiful Beggar Girl; or, A Diamond in the Rough," 26 May-18 August 1894; "Jennie, the Bookfolder; or, The Orphan Girl's Wrongs," "Family Story Paper," 19 February-4 June 1883; "Pretty Madcap Dorothy; or, How She Won a Lover. A Romance of the Jolliest Girl in the Book Bindery and a Magnificent Love Story of the Life of a Beautiful New York Working Girl," "Fireside Companion," 2 January 1892; "Maida, the Pretty Bookfolder; or, The Love that Never Failed," "Family Story Paper," 23 January-17 April 1897; "Carmenita, the Cigarette Girl; or, The Dark Corners of a Great City," "Family Story Paper," 16 March-22 June 1885; "Kitty, the Pretty Blonde Cigarette Maker," "Family Story Paper," 13 December 1891-7 March 1892;

"Sarah, the Servant Girl; or, The Missing Heiress," "Family Story Paper," 9 January-27 March 1882; "The Flower-Girl of Savannah; or, Hearts of Fire," "Fireside Companion," 8 October 1887; "Alice, The Candy Girl; or, A Million of Money," "Family Story Paper," 19 April-21 June 1880; "Violet, the Beautiful Street Singer; or, An Ill Starred Bethrothal. The Romance of a Poor but Lovely Young Girl," "Family Story Paper," 5 December 1896-27 February 1897.

9—See for example: "Baby Ruth's Governess; or, The Mission of a Brave Soldier's Lass," "Family Story Paper," 14 October-27 January 1894; "Her Dream of Love; or, The Romance of a Nursery Governess," "Family Story Paper," 28 December 1895-28 March 1896; "Gypsy Blanche, the Wonderful Lady Detective," "Fireside Companion," 3 April 1882; "Lady Kate, the Dashing Female Detective," "Fireside Companion," 14 August 1882; "Mura, the Western Lady Detective," "Fireside Companion," 15 June 1885; "Courtship by Telephone; or, The Strange Love of Little Ora, The Beautiful Girl at 'Central,'" "Family Story Paper," 4 March-27 May 1893; "Goldie, the Telegraph Operator; or, Flashed Over the Wires," "Family Story Paper," 27 April-7 September 1885; and "Leonie, the Typewriter. A Romance of Actual Life," "Family Story Paper," 1 March-17 May 1890.

10—See for example: "Lola, The Beautiful; or, The Bitter with the Sweet. The Romance of a Gifted Young Passion-Writer's Life," "Family Story Paper," 22 August-14 November 1891; "New York By Night; or, A Female Reporter Tracking a \$500,000 Robbery," "Family Story Paper," 20 September-13 December 1890; "Beautiful Kathleen; or, The Irish Girl Artist," "Fireside Companion," 2 August 1880; "Evelyn, the Actress; or, The Leading Lady of the Corinthian. A Romance of the Stage," "Family Story Paper," 1 August-31 October 1896; and "A Bachelor Girl; or, Bound to Be a New Woman," "Family Story Paper," 19 October 1895-11 January 1896.

11—Helen Waite Papashvily, "All the Happy Endings" (New York: Harper and Brothers Publishers, 1956), pp. 202-03.

12—Theodore Dreiser to Ernest Boyd, 26 August 1921. The quotation in the following paragraph is also from this letter.

13—For different interpretations of Dreiser's letter to Boyd see W. A. Swanberg, "Dreiser" (New York: Scribner's, 1965, p. 252; and Cathy N. and Arnold E. Davidson, "Carrie's Sisters: The Popular Prototypes for Dreiser's Heroine," "Modern Fiction Studies," Autumn 1977, 395-407.

14—Conversation with Edward T. LeBlanc, 24 August 1982.

15—For all works mentioned in this paragraph see: "Fireside Companion," 2 April-21 July 1884; "Library of American Authors," #10, 1888; "Seaside Library," #2172, 1889; "Laura Jean Libbey's Charming Stories," #6, 1896; "Sweetheart Series," #14, 21 November 1898.

16—Edward T. LeBlanc to author, 20 April 1983.

17—Cathy N. Davidson, "American Women Authors," Ed. Lina Mainiero (New York: Frederick Ungar Publishing Co., 1979), Vol. I, pp. 3-5, and Papashvily, p. 206.

18—See almost any issue of a family story paper in which a romance by Libbey appears.

19—Papashvily, pp. 202-03.

20—Papashvily, p. 206.

21—Noel, p. 383.

22—Noel, pp. 389-90; "New York Weekly," 23 February 1885, p. 4.

23—"Dime Novel Round-Up," #95, July 1940, p. 4.

BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFLECTIONS—POSTSCRIPT ON COPYRIGHT DATA—Conclusion

By Denis R. Rogers

The card index revealed three hitherto unknown Ellis works, of which one, while copyrighted by the author, was marked with the name of a little known newspaper syndicate, Tilletson's Newspaper Literature. The other two titles were copyrighted as contributions to newspapers and magazines (i.e., category (g) above). In addition four more new titles came to light all of which were identifiable with published works bearing a varied title.

The two titles copyrighted as designs may cover one of Ellis' many inventions, since one of the entries is marked: Goepel & R. / Tryon Row, N.Y. The 1882-83 and 1883-84 New York City Directories list Paul Goepel at Tryon Row, in the former year as a publisher and in the latter year as a lawyer. A letter, dated 7 January 1910, from Goepel & Goepel, Counsellors at Law and Patent Attorneys of 290 Broadway, New York, on a quite different matter shows Paul Goepel and Cal. P. Goepel as the partners. This suggests to me that "photographs on title" may have been an invention by Ellis of a new method of printing illustrations, which he protected by copyrighting examples with the assistance of a patent lawyer.

There is still a reasonable chance of locating the titles traced to definite periodicals, to literary syndicates and to one particular publisher, but the prospect of locating the published sources of the copyrights listed under newspaper and magazines articles looks far less good, since they were probably serials.

The point worth stressing, however, is that the copyright entries provided clues to further research, which have already led to the location of six of the unlocated Ellis items and which hold out hope of further success.

A study of the assignment records was our next target. These are not difficult to consult, because there is an excellent card index, which enables the researcher to locate quickly the entries important to him. Our experience was rewarding with a tinge of frustration. Between 1889 and 1911 we discovered sixteen assignments of copyrights relating to works by Edward S. Ellis. Some were assignment to or by Ellis himself, while others were assignments between publishers. The following examples demonstrate how valuable to my Ellis research the copyright assignment records proved:—

- (a) Assignment on 4 September 1889 by Ellis to The American News Company, New York of Copyright No. 25303 N, dated 19 August 1889. This assignment revealed that "The Southern Cross; or, Max Crumm's Cryptogram" by Capt. R. M. Hawthorne was almost certainly published as a paperback booklet by The Excelsior Publishing House, New York, as well as being serialized by The Detroit Free Press. Moreover, by implication, a reprint paperback edition bearing the imprint of The American News Company cannot be ruled out.
- (b) Royalty assignment on 10 September 1890 by Ellis to John Karst of New York, in respect of Copyright No. 9612 P, dated 15 May 1884, covering sales of "The Eclectic Primary History of the United States." This assignment illustrates how Ellis was realizing personal assets in order to continue publication of "The Boys' Holiday"/"The Holiday."
- (c) Assignment on 24 January 1894 by Ellis to F. Hartley Woolfall of all his rights and interest in "The Boys' Holiday"/"The Holiday" for \$1.00. This assignment is especially important for three reasons, namely:—
 - (1) that it proves Ellis to have been the proprietor and not merely the

editor of "The Boys' Holiday"/"The Holiday."

- (2) that it illustrates Ellis almost certainly to have had a stake in The Woolfall Publishing Company instead of selling out to Woolfall and merely remaining as editor of the story paper. The reason for saying so is because the assignment is dated 24 January 1894, and "The Holiday" folded with No. 73, dated 13 June 1891.
- (3) that the "Good News" reprints of serials and sketches, which had first appeared (or, at the least, had been begun) in "The Boys' Holiday"/"The Holiday," were by arrangement with The Woolfall Publishing Company and not through acquisition of that company's rights and interests my Street & Smith.

Reason (3) is confirmed by another assignment, dated 28 December 1900, in which F. Hartley Woolfall sells, assigns and transfers to Edward S. Ellis all high rights, title and interest in four stories, which had appeared in "The Boys' Holiday"/"The Holiday," namely:—

"Down the Susquehanna" by William Murray Grawdon.

"The World Before Him" by George Coomer.

"Rival Camps" by Rev. Dr. W. P. Chipman.

"Uncle Sam's Tars" by W. H. Lewis.

The consideration was again one dollar. Incidentally the assignment of the rights in "The Rival Camps" by Rev. Dr. W. P. Chipman offers a feasible explanation of the reprint in book form by The John C. Winston Company in 1906, under the title, "The Cruise of the Firefly," by Edward S. Ellis and Wm. Pendleton Chipman, D.D. I have yet to compare the texts, but I expect to find that there was some revision of the serial text before reprinting in book form. Unless Ellis had been the copyright proprietor he could hardly have joined his name with that of Chipman as co-ophor and, perhaps, have tinkered with the text.

(d) An assignment, dated 26 December 1911, by Dana Estes & Company of Boston to the John C. Winston Company of Philadelphia of the copyrights in nine titles by Edward S. Ellis, for \$1.00 per volume, proves that Winston acquired the rights in those tales before and not after the demise of the Boston firm, as I had suspected. It also indicates that even if, as I believed, "Fighting Phil" by Edward S. Ellis was intended for publication by Dana Estes, it was not completed before Winston added the Ellis books published by Dana Estes to their juvenile list. Strangely no copyright entry for "Fighting Phil" has been found, although Winston records its copyrighting by them on the verso of the title page. Evidently the actual copyrighting was overlooked by the Philadelphia publisher.

The element of frustration arose in this way. We were told that there was a microfilm copy of the Assignment Record Books and were led to the microfilm reads, which incorporated facilities for producing xerox reproductions on a coin operated basis. This pleased us immensely, because we could run off copies of the sixteen Ellis assignments fast and so save precious research time. To our disappointment, however, the microfilms were of such poor quality that it proved impossible to obtain readable xerox copies. Consequently we were forced to go back to the Record Books and copy out the assignment for permanent record purposes. This was one occasion when I was particularly grateful for the assistance provided by our editor!

Although there is no Record Book of Copyright Renewals, there are card indexes. These we consulted and were able to record the many renewals effected by Ellis himself and by his two daughters after his death. Renewals are not of bibliographical importance to me and I doubt whether HHB readers

need waste much time on these records, when visiting the Copyright Office. It could be argued, of course, that renewal indicates a continued demand for new editions as, otherwise, no one would bother to renew copyright protection. In the case of Ellis, however, there is reason to believe that his daughters either had an exaggerated idea of the listing significance of Ellis' works or—and this seems more likely in my opinion—that they were persuaded to renew copyrights en masse or, at any rate, non fiction copyrights.

There is one more record, which can be consulted, namely the deposit copies of copyright titles. The deposit copies of unlocated works may have been preserved and the Copyright Office will have them "pulled" (their technical term) and brought up to the James Madison Building for study on payment of the prescribed fees. This is expensive and so I was not altogether displeased that only ten of the copyright of unlocated Ellis works recorded the deposit of the two copies, which are required by law to complete the copyright formalities.

The "pull" failed to locate two of the recorded deposits and I was informed that the remaining eight comprised title pages only. Nevertheless I decided to ask for xerox reproductions and was rewarded by information not included in the copyright entries themselves. That data can be summarized as follows:—

- (1) A fuller descriptive title for one item.
- (2) A better understanding of one item, namely that "Stories of Sherman" probably comprised two and not three or four stories.
- (3) Although three of the stories were copyrighted in the author's name, the copyright entries were in fact submitted to the Library of Congress and the copyright fees were paid by a syndicate (two by The American Press Association and one by the S. S. McClure Company which, I understand, operated The McClure Syndicate).
- (4) A definite link between the by-line, St. Cyr Randolph, and Edward F. Ellis (almost certainly a mistype of Edward S. Ellis).
- (5) A reproduction of the cover (presumably paper) of an unlocated penmanship manual.

Number (3) was the really important discovery, in that it pinpointed the field of future research most likely to prove productive. In general terms number (3) also underlined that the copyright entry cannot be assumed to be the last word from the research viewpoint.

Before endeavoring to distil our experiences into guidelines or pointers, which might assist readers to determine the value of copyright research for their own project, I feel that a tribute should be paid to the officials at the Copyright Office. Although it was obvious that our interest in copyright was entirely bibliographical and, therefore, outside the mainstream of the Office's duties, our reception was uniformly courteous and helpful.

A summary of this article is not an easy task, but for what they are worth here are my conclusions:—

- (1) The Copyright Office should not be regarded as a primary research field. A study of "The Publishers' Trade List Annuals," "The Publishers' Weekly Record of New Publications" and "The Union Catalogues" (especially the "Pre-1956 Imprints") is recommended before contemplating a visit to The Copyright Office.
- (2) The reader would be well advised to determine the scope of his projected research and to get to know the structure of the copyright records in the first place.

- (3) Having decided that the copyright records could be of value to your research, clear the decks for your visit to The Copyright Office by making full use of the published records to cut down to a minimum the work required at the James Madison Building. The records at the Copyright Office are well organized, but they are vast and so research can become wearisome. There is also the danger of being sidetracked, if you haven't prepared a clear program for yourself.
- (4) Even if you have prepared a clear program, a quick study of the card indexes for copyrights from 1 July 1870 to the end of 1897 and for assignments of copyrights could produce worthwhile results. Here again, however, it is as well to be certain of the names of the authors, including pseudonyms (for the pen name was sometimes recorded on the copyright entry as claimant) and publishers (as copyright proprietors) to be checked.
- (5) If and when you come across unlocated entries in the card index, it is as well to take a look at the actual copyright entries in the Record Books, as they sometimes contain valuable research clues, added at the time the entry was written.
- (6) Remember that the copyright records are rarely conclusive in themselves. As will have been seen from what has been said in this article, they can point to sources of information which, otherwise, would not have suggested themselves.
- (7) Allow yourself ample time at the Copyright Office, for the records are too extensive to permit of a lightning flash through them.
- (8) The District Court Records (i.e., for entries prior to July 1870) are not a promising field of research, even if you can spare the time for laborious checks of the District Court Record Books in the Rare Book Room of The Library of Congress.

All that remains is to record my warm thanks to Eddie and Florence Le Blanc, Jack Bales, Robert Frothingham (husband of Ellis' great granddaughter) and Leonard N. Beck of the Library of Congress' Rare Book Room for the tremendous help they have accorded me and, finally, to wish all of you who decide to enter this fascinating, if difficult, research field, good hunting.

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LETTERS

Dear Eddie;

We just returned from a two-week-plus tour of northern Europe, Stockholm, Oslo, Bergen, Gothenburg and Copenhagen, and I tried to find used-book stores wherever we were.

Stockholm has one or two that I could find, but I could find nothing anywhere except in Copenhagen where there is a particular area that has many.

I was successful at one, it is "Fantastic" and is located at the corner of Skt. Pederstræte and Hestemstræde. I found a lot of fine Tarzan Danish comic books on quality paper and in good condition, many even like new. All are Russ Manning illustrated, fifty or more pages 8½x10 or so.

All of the book stores have an "American" section, some call it the English section. For the most part all of the English books are of the scholarly type, but I did see some of the more popular titles. All are spotlessly clean, very neat and well organized.

Customers have free access to all of the shop, but there is a language barrier. For the most part, only the young people speak English, and although I can communicate to some extent with the German speaking people, I could get nowhere with the Danish or the Swedes.

The young people are getting it in school, but the older people just smile and call on others to help.

For new books there are perhaps hundreds of book stores in all of the five cities we visited and there are many books from the states available. You see a great deal of art, literature, the theater and the nudes, but there is nothing objectionable.

There are many books on their own history, and you can see so much of their history as you tour the cities. Sweden and Denmark have had no wars to ruin their landscape or buildings for more than 500 years, so you can see much of the country just as it was at that time.

And while Norway was involved in WW II the damage was limited to the coast, so the cities all remain intact.

In northern Europe you do not see all the rebuilding that was necessary in southern Europe, so it is a most interesting tour, and if you are a backpacker and care to do it on a bicycle, it is all very convenient. Denmark and Sweden are relatively flat, making the bicycle ideal for transportation, and we saw a lot of them.

So, if any of our readers are thinking Copenhagen, it is a real treat to visit the used-book stores.

Sincerely, Willis J. Potthoff

Eddie—

I just haven't had the time to hunt up the mention of Lu Senarens and his "Steam Man" story that prompted my interest in the entry copied below, but seem to remember that he was living in NY or Newark, and that his story came out about 1868. I'll leave it to you and others more expert to draw conclusions, but here's an item from the 1964/1965 N. J. Almanac:

Dederick, Zadoc, c1830-1880. Newark pattern maker and inventor. In 1868 introduced a "steam man" to pull horseless carriage. The mechanical man, fully clothed, was so devised to prevent startling horses. — N. J. Almanac 64/65 p. 313.

I hope this is of some interest, best

Walter Rodgers

Ed. Note: In August 1868 Irwin's American Novels No. 45 titled "The

"Steam Man of the Plains," by Edward S. Ellis was issued. Whether the inventor, Zadoc Dederick, got his idea from the story or Ellis got his inspiration for his story from the "invention" will probably remain a mystery forever. The Frank Tousey "Steam Man" was not published until 1879 and was by Harry Enton who wrote the first four Frank Reade stories. Lu Senarens continued the series into the late 1890's.

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